

Michael F. Easley
Governor



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STATE PORTS AUTHORITY AND JAPANESE SHIPPING COMPANY CELEBRATE PARTNERSHIP WITH ARRIVAL OF NEW VESSEL

WILMINGTON – The North Carolina State Ports Authority and one of the world's largest container shipping operators today celebrated their recently formed partnership with the arrival of a new ship on its maiden voyage.

The *Delaware Bridge* becomes one of the largest vessels in the service of Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha Ltd, or K-Line, of Tokyo, Japan. Built in 2002, the ship is 870 feet long, 105 feet wide and has a design draft of 43 feet. It can carry more than 47,000, 20-foot containers.

"The arrival of this magnificent ship and the agreement with K-Line are further indications that we are moving in the right direction with capital improvements to our ports and deepening of the Cape Fear River channel into Wilmington," Gov. Mike Easley said.

"These enhancements to our infrastructure will help retain businesses in North Carolina, attract new companies and generate more than 25,000 jobs across the state," Easley said. "In addition, our commitment to pursuing distribution centers will mean even more trade and employment opportunities in the long term."

Last November following his trade mission to the Far East, Easley announced the agreement which essentially reintroduces the presence of a Japanese shipping company to North Carolina for the first time in 12 years. K-Line's United States operations are headquartered out of Richmond, Va.

"Strong demographics, growth in retail outlets, available workforce, good transportation and near completion of the Wilmington Harbor deepening project make North Carolina an attractive site for the creation of distribution centers," said Erik Stromberg, executive director of the N.C. State Ports Authority. "We're also adding shipping lines at Wilmington to generate more options for companies importing and exporting goods."

"North Carolina has long been an important market for us, and we remember our excellent service at the Port of Wilmington," said Capt. Gerhard Hupfeld Sr., vice president of Linder Sales & Services, K-Line America Inc. "With the new 42-foot channel, we look forward to strengthening our relationship with our customers, as well as opening up additional opportunities for new customers."

K-Line began service between Wilmington and the Far East earlier this year under the joint operating and vessel-sharing agreement that also includes the Asian shipping companies Yang Ming Line of Taiwan, Hanjin Shipping Co. of South Korea and Cosco Shipping Co. of China.

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